

WOMAN

New Mexico

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Women and Small Business

IN NEW MEXICO

HIRING THE BEST

DOING IT BY THE NUMBERS

DO YOU REALLY WANT TO BE AN EMPLOYER?



GOVERNMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR SMALL BUSINESS

A frequently overlooked yet potentially lucrative opportunity for woman-owned small businesses is to sell products or services to the U.S. government. In simple terms, the government buys (or "procures") what it needs through a solicitation such as a Request for Quote. Next, it receives bids or proposals from businesses that sell what it's looking for. After careful review, it selects the business (or businesses) that best meets its needs and price, and enters into a contractual relationship with the business.

For most small businesses, the government's procurement process can seem overwhelming. Fortunately, the Small Business Administration is mandated to oversee a program known as the 8 (a) Business Development program, or 8 (a), for short. This program serves socially and economically disadvantaged small business owners who wish to contract with the federal government. The program may enable qualifying woman- and minority-owned businesses, in certain cases, to contract with federal agencies without having to competitively bid.

The federal government is huge, and the contracting opportunities it offers are likewise. New Mexico is especially rich with contracting opportunities through government agencies such as the DOE, GSA, Air Force, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

As Chief of Contracting for the Corps of Engineers, Albuquerque District, Theresa Armijo sees many contracts pass across her desk, especially in the areas of construction and engineering. She and the Albuquerque District team make every effort to support the small business 8 (a) program. In fact, Armijo received a letter of appreciation from the Area Director of the SBA for her outstanding support and effort to benefit the SBA and our nation.

"The Albuquerque District Corps of Engineers is the primary agency to oversee construction projects for many government agencies throughout New Mexico, southern Colorado, and parts of Texas," says Armijo. "We do a tremendous amount of construction at Kirtland Air Force Base, for example, and many of our contractors are woman-owned companies."

Armijo started working in government procurement and acquisitions over 28 years ago. "I took a standardized clerical test when I was 19 years old," she explains, regarding her choice of career. "I must have done well on the test, because I got a call back for an interview. 'What's procurement?' I asked. And that was the start of my wonderful career."

Armijo credits her Catholic schooling, hard work, on-the-job training, and support from her family for her advancement. "I started as a GS-3 and moved up over the years to a GS-13," she says, describing the tremendous and rapid growth in her career. "I love acquisitions," she says. "It's so wonderful to know that I can make a difference and serve the people of my country. It's very rewarding."

The Corps of Engineers oversees much more in New Mexico than new construction, according to Armijo. Their oversight includes emergency management (for example, the Cerro Grande fire), dams and their resulting recreation areas (such as Abiquiu and Cochiti Lakes), and renovation.

"That's one of the things that I love about my current job," says Armijo. "I'm no longer working contracts primarily for research and development. Instead, with construction contracts, I can see the results of my efforts."

"It's so satisfying to drive by a new family housing complex on base ... and to think, 'I helped to make that happen.'"

If you are interested in seeking contracting opportunities with the Corps of Engineers, visit their Web site at www.spa.usace.army.mil/cntrct/cont.htm. For more information regarding SBA's 8 (a) BD program, go to www.sba.gov/8abd/. **N.W.**

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